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This month, one of the stars of today's golden age of Canadian tennis, Denis Shapovalov, returns to the Montreal tournament where his pro career began, the National Bank Open. We spoke to Shapovalov about that 2017 match, aspiring to Federer greatness, the other Denis Shapovalov, famous fans, making music, poutine and more.

Photo courtesy of ATP Tour

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Cult MTL is...

Lorraine Carpenter
editor-in-chief
lorraine.carpenter@cultmontreal.com

Justine Smith
film editor
justine.smith@cultmontreal.com

Clayton Sandhu
food editor

Savannah Stewart
contributing editor (arts)

Paul Desbaillets
contributing editor (football culture)

Chris Tucker
art director

Advertising
ads@cultmontreal.com

Contributors:
Stephan Boissoneault
Johnson Cummins
Ryan Diduck
Sruti Islam
Erik Leijon
Darcy MacDonald
Dave MacIntyre

Special Thanks: Ashley Fish-Robertson

General inquiries + feedback
info@cultmontreal.com



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city

In play

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

The past decade has seen a golden age for Canadian tennis, with unprecedented wins and rankings by Bianca Andreescu and Milos Raonic and the rise of Montrealers Felix Auger-Aliassime and Leylah Fernandez. Key to this story is Denis Shapovalov, a player who's been on every Canadian tennis fan's radar since he defeated Rafael Nadal in an epic match at the Rogers Cup in Montreal in 2017, when he was only 18 years old.

"I can still remember the noise of the crowd like it was yesterday," says Shapovalov, on a Zoom call from his home in the Bahamas. "That whole week was kind of a starting point for my professional career, the moment where I made it on tour, so it's definitely always special to come back and play Montreal with those fans again."

This month, Shapovalov will return to the Montreal tournament (now known as the National Bank Open) for only the second time since that crazy match, to show this city's fans what he's made of in 2022.

Born in Israel, raised in Toronto, Shapovalov came up alongside his friend Auger-Aliassime, ranking #2 at the junior level, achieving a #10 ranking as a pro and reaching the 2021 semi-finals at Wimbledon (where he won the title as a junior in 2016).

"I think Wimbledon is just so prestige," he says. "It's the top tournament in tennis in that respect, and it's just really cool to be a part of. But the U.S. Open is more my personality. The style, the noise, the fans in New York City — the energy of it is so electric."

Shapovalov, a lefty with a one-handed backhand, is known for his aggressive, "high-risk" style — a powerful ground game, but not necessarily a consistent one. When asked how to recapture the magic he's capable of when things aren't going well in a match, he says it's all in the prep.

"It's important to keep having confidence in yourself," he says. "When things aren't going well, the work that I do put in day in, day out, it's gonna come out in the important moments when I need it to. Of course, tennis is always up and down, not just in the match but as the weeks go, so it's important to always remember that all the work that you put into it does pan out sooner or later."

Like most athletes, Shapovalov obliged to stick to a strict diet, particularly during tournaments — you'll often see him eating bananas during matches, on the advice of a former coach, though he recently revealed that it might be the fruit he hates the most. Post-tournament, when it's possible to consume more decadent fare, he's more of a burger guy than someone who's likely to indulge in Quebec's national dish.

"I'm not super crazy for poutine, but I know in Montreal you guys have that famous place with people waiting outside," he says, referring to la Banquise. "I always wanted to go but it seems like crazy lines, all the time."



Corinne Dubreuil

On the rare occasion that he has any downtime, Shapovalov works on music. It's a hobby he shared with the world by rapping post-match at the Indian Wells tournament in 2019, on the request of the stadium's emcee. Shapovalov later described his own impromptu performance as "awful," but the pandemic allowed him the time to hone his flow.

"I've been writing lyrics for five, six years now, and during the pandemic it was easy to focus on that, build a home studio and just record stuff and put some things together. It takes a lot of time and effort, which is difficult when the season is in play, but I definitely want to get back into the studio."

Perhaps a musical collaboration between Denis Shapovalov the tennis player and Denis Shapovalov the Russian cellist (and owner of denisshapovalov.com) is in order. "I've never thought about that, but it would definitely be cool just to meet him. He's been around for quite some time. I recall, when I was young, I would Google to see who has my name and it turns out he's a pretty famous musician."

Over the course of his pro career so far, Shapovalov has attracted his share of famous fans, even early on. Wayne Gretzky watched one of his matches during the 2017 Rogers Cup, telling the media that Shapovalov had "captured the imagination" of Montreal fans. More recently, Shapovalov got a chance to work with another famous Oilers player, Connor McDavid, through a sponsorship.

"He came to one of my Davis Cup matches, along with a

couple of other hockey guys, so that's been pretty fun," says Shapovalov, who gravitated towards hockey as a child, but was discouraged by his parents — notably his mother Tessa, a former tennis player and her son's first coach — because of the injuries that are occupational hazards in pro hockey.

As far as his own fandom is concerned, one tennis player that Shapovalov admires, and has yet to face on the court, is Spain's Carlos Alcaraz.

"I'm a huge fan of his game. I think he's an unbelievable talent, but he's also a great person — super humble and a nice guy. It'd be really fun to play him and I'm sure we'll have the chance throughout our career. I look forward to it."

One of Shapovalov's childhood tennis heroes was Roger Federer, a champion at the end of a career filled with highlights. A footnote to that legacy is Federer's branding, which includes what's arguably one of the best logos in sports. I asked whether that level of design is something Shapovalov has ever pondered.

"At some point in my career, of course it would be great if I achieve enough to make my logo," he says. "But I need to work to get to that kind of place before I can start thinking about that."

→ Denis Shapovalov will play singles and doubles (alongside Karen Khachanov) at the 2022 National Bank Open, which takes place at Stade IGA in Montreal's Jarry Park from Aug. 5–14.

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Kicking off



Marc-Andre Donato

BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Montreal’s annual outdoor celebration of the beautiful game is back in full swing this weekend — and footy fans from all walks of life are in for a treat.

Founded by Paul Desbaillets — Burgundy Lion Group co-founder, podcaster, football (soccer) fanatic and *Cult MTL* columnist — GOAL has been a festival for footballing culture in Montreal since its first event in 2010. This comes after the 2020 edition was held virtually, and the 2021 edition was held at Stade Saputo, with only CF Montreal season ticket holders and Collective CFM subscribers in attendance.

GOAL’s annual summer event will take place rain or shine on Sunday, Aug. 7 at the McGill Stadium, and is free to the public. Starting at 9 a.m. and ending around 5:30 p.m., the event’s 12th edition will have something for all ages, including games, children’s activities, live art for auction, a tie-dye station, temporary tattoos and even haircuts courtesy of Maison Privée. Café Olimpico will be partnering once again with the event, providing coffee and breakfast sandwiches.

On the footy side, a “top bins challenge,” where fans can try shooting a ball to hit targets on the net, will also be part of the festivities. Best of all, there’ll be jumbotron screenings of two of that day’s marquee matchups for the start of the new Premier League season: Manchester United at home versus Brighton and Hove Albion, followed by crosstown rivals Manchester City away at West Ham United.

As far as the GOAL festival itself? Mixed-gender teams from local community organizations, bars and restaurants will compete against one another in friendly matches during the day. Between this and having more activities available for those attending, Desbaillets is happy to see GOAL back in its regular form despite the ongoing pandemic.

“Getting that whole vibe back again is a really big deal for us, and for everybody,” he says. “That’s why every festival in the city is completely packed, because people are finally out again.”

Soccer is a sport that can unify people from all walks of life like no other, and GOAL Initiatives aims to foster a sense of community and inclusivity through the sport. Desbaillets considers the broadcasting of the two Premier League matches to be a “fantastic” new element of the event, even though they’ve screened Euro and the World Cup there in the past.

“It’s been so many years [since the last GOAL event] that we’re all juiced up,” he adds. “We feel like it’s the first time.”

GOAL has also struck up some new partnerships, including the digital currency platform Shakepay, through which donations to GOAL can be made — another new feature in this year’s event. Funds will also be raised for HeartShapedHands, the foundation of CF Montreal striker Kei Kamara that helps kids in his native Sierra Leone pay for their education and get scholarships, as well as for the MLS-sponsored Black Players for Change. GOAL has also been using fundraising money to help put kids through the Sport-études program with Soccer Quebec this past season, which they’ll do again this year if enough funds are raised.

“Everything that we provide and do, we’re going to do through fundraisers,” Desbaillets says, also mentioning a special cocktail at the Burgundy Lion as one of those events.

“We’re going to do other 5 à 7 events and other things throughout the year to raise funds and awareness and see how much we can gather at the end to support these different groups. It’s a long-term thing.”

Digital workshops will also be available for attendees to take part in, including one from Jérémie Falissard of the Barroco group, devoted to cooking great meals at reasonable prices; a magic show from local magician Bao Hoang (aka Bao Magic); and a DJ workshop with Jojo Flores. Essentially, the event on Aug. 7 will be the launch of GOAL Initiatives’ planning and community-building for this year.

As great as it is that GOAL is coming back in its full form, the pandemic still isn’t over — and with that has come some challenges for Desbaillets along the way. Securing event spaces despite many locations already being rented (often for weddings), putting on the GOAL event despite Montreal festival season kicking into high gear, raising funds, finding donors, and having to be “mindful of who you’re asking and how much you’re asking for” with financial handouts.

“Those elements — location and dollars — have been a challenge,” Desbaillets admits. “But you’d be surprised how many people have actually stepped up and come to the table. Some of the same people who have supported [us] big time during the pandemic came around this year again to support a lot of new people... Those 20 teams were filled pretty much instantly.”

This year’s GOAL event will also be the first one to take place before a FIFA World Cup appearance for Canada’s men’s team. Between this and the Canadian women’s team’s gold

medal-winning performance at last year’s Summer Olympics in Tokyo, this country is a rising soccer powerhouse. Desbaillets thinks footy culture in Montreal and in Canada is “budding up like no one’s ever seen,” stating also that the men’s team’s qualification for the tournament in Qatar in November will be a turning point.

“Soccer is growing in Canada at an immense rate,” he adds. “The stats are there. There’s more boys and girls playing [the sport] than there are playing hockey because of the price of entry, as well as our immigrant population, which is what makes Canada so amazing.”

All good things take time, and Desbaillets has seen not only the emergence of the men’s national team program, but also CF Montreal’s presence in MLS since 2012, as results of the time and effort taken to grow footy culture locally and nationally.

“I think we’re on our way,” he continues. “This festival is exactly the kind of thing we’re proud of. It shows off the positives — charity, community, connection, all these people from different organizations coming together to have a good time.”

Desbaillets adds that he thinks the men’s national team could do “fantastic” in Qatar. They won’t win it all — the team must first advance from a group with Belgium, Croatia and Morocco, before likely facing either Spain or Germany in the Round of 16 — but they’ll gain “untold” experience from playing in footy’s showpiece event and continue progressing before Canada co-hosts the subsequent World Cup in 2026 with the U.S. and Mexico.

Needless to say, both the Canadian national soccer program and GOAL Initiatives have grown by leaps and bounds over the years. GOAL’s inaugural event on a small field on a cold, rainy June day in its first edition — one that caused Desbaillets to think the event wouldn’t happen again after that — before eventually levelling up to McGill’s football stadium, with pro athletes and major local organizations taking part.

“I wouldn’t in my wildest imagination think it would’ve gotten to this point,” he says. “I still think it can go further. It can go bigger, raise more funds, do bigger things. We could do some stuff in Toronto potentially, because it’s a national organization. There’s lots of opportunity to do really cool things. It’s endless.”

→ GOAL takes place at the Percival Molson Memorial Stadium (475 des Pins) on Sunday, Aug. 7, 9 a.m.–5:30 p.m., free



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BY DAVE MACINTYRE

This month's column is probably a horrible idea. Why? As of this magazine's deadline, I've had COVID for the past week. I'm doing fine — the symptoms have never been more than mild for me, and so far I've just got some sniffles and a lingering cough. Nonetheless, smoking weed while I'm stuck in isolation — as much as it has definitely helped make the experience more tolerable — is probably quite ill-advised when my lungs already haven't been having a great time. And yet, I persist, because that's the risk we take for that stoner clout.

This month, Tremblant Kush from Tremblant Cannabis is my test subject for getting through this last stretch of my bout with the 'rona. Grown in Lac Supérieur near Mont-Tremblant, and a subsidiary of craft cannabis supplier Laurentian Organic, this strain is known as "glueberry" — that is, a combo of Blueberry, Gorilla Glue and OG Kush. With a name like that, there's no way I couldn't give this one a go.

Smoking it through my portable vape since it's not as harsh on my lungs that way, I decided to try it out while watching TV — because frankly, what else do I do in my predicament?

TREMBLANT KUSH

This is an indica-dominant hybrid clocking in at 23% THC, and gives me a high primarily concentrated within my head, though definitely the relaxing kind of head high. Smoking it leaves you with a bit of a fruity taste in your mouth, and the buds are a bright enough shade of green that it almost looks like they have a light brown colour to them (particularly apparent after you grind them). They also seem somewhat earthy-smelling, but then again, perhaps COVID has momentarily warped my sense of smell. Brittleness also isn't an issue here — the buds are a bit dry, but just enough so you can still feel some moisture. The Tremblant Cannabis

company slogan is "for folks who like it old school," and well, kush is about as old school as you can get.

Although I would've liked more of a body high in addition to a head high, this still leaves you with some tingly feelings in your limbs. It's also a pretty good daytime strain, which is wild because I almost never smoke during the day. I still won't, but I'm glad this strain has that going for it. Smoking Tremblant Kush gives me quite a visceral viewing experience while I start binging the third season of *Atlanta*. Without spoiling anything (because the plot is worth going into cold), getting high and watching the first episode is a FREAKY experience. It's already a show with some of the most clever writing and biting social commentary you will see on television (particularly on race), and Donald Glover isn't afraid to take it to some disturbing extremes.

The weed left me a bit couch-locked, too, which enhanced the viewing experience even further. As much as I would LOVE to go out and do things normally right now (and lord knows that's hard enough during a pandemic and climate change-fuelled heatwaves), this is a pleasant high that helps make the end of my isolation worth the wait. God, I'd love to sit on a terrasse with a nice, cold beer right now. 8.5/10

:the 1st half



BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

Believe it or not, it's August and that doesn't mean that the summer is over since it's been Hot, Hot, Hot in la belle province. What it means is that all the football in Europe is about to start in a few days.

Montreal is in full-swing festival season with something happening almost every day since the start of F1 madness. One festival close to my heart is set to go down Sunday, Aug. 7 at the beautiful McGill Stadium in the heart of downtown Montreal. GOAL Initiatives Friendly Football Festival is a free event, with Montreal bars, restaurants, hospitality industry and other local businesses taking part to rally the community to offer financial support to Heart Shaped Hands, Black Players for Change in the MLS and Soccer Quebec. (Read more about the event on p. 8.)

Returning now to European football: The pro leagues in Germany, France, Spain, Italy and England, to name a few, have all started early in 2022 because in the middle of the year, (Nov. 18, to be specific,) the 2022 World Cup will kick off, and for the first time ever said leagues will all take a one-month break in the middle of their season until it all concludes Dec. 18.

(Please Santa Claus, all I want for Christmas is a team Canada vs. team England final.)

During this brief summer holiday, many moves have been made by these European clubs to make themselves stronger for this very interesting season ahead.

Money, Money, Money, as always, has been shifted all over the world and the biggest moves at the time of this magazine's deadline are:

PAULO DYBALA to ROMA

MATTHIJS DE LIGT to FC BAYERN

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI to BARCA

KALIDOU KOULIBALY to CHELSEA FC

RAPHINHA to BARCA

CHRISTIAN ERIKSEN to MANCHESTER UNITED

RAHEEM STERLING to CHELSEA FC

PAUL POGBA to JUVENTUS

ANGEL DI MARIA to JUVENTUS

GABRIEL JESUS to ARSENAL FC

KALVIN PHILLIPS to MANCHESTER CITY

DARWIN NUNEZ to LIVERPOOL FC

ERLING HAALAND to MANCHESTER CITY

RICHARLISON to SPURS

ROMELU LUKAKU to INTER MILAN

ANTONIO RUDIGER to REAL MADRID,

And that's just to name a few, with the window still wide open for deals to be made. I can't wait to see how all these shifts create new rivalries and exciting match-ups in this new season ahead.

Now it's time to get into football on this side of the pond. Big moves saw British footballer Gareth Bale move over to the Los Angeles Football Club, while Canadian MLS club Toronto FC made some gigantic moves as well with the signings of Federico Bernardeschi and Lorenzo Insigne, that both started playing for TFC at the end of July. Great international vibes!

The 2022 MLS All-Star week will be Aug. 8–10 in Minneapolis and we'll see some of the best and brightest that the MLS has to offer on show. This year will have the MLS ALL STARS versus LIGA MX ALL STARS available to watch on TSN or TVA Aug. 10 in the p.m., depending on where you are. MLS is working very hard to connect on a regular basis with the Mexican Football League in an attempt to broaden its viewership.

Now for the BEST NEWS from July: The Canadian Women's National team won 1–0 over Panama, which led them to qualify for the FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in 2023! Once again, it's been proven how strong and consistent this team is in all major world competitions.

"There is no pressure when you are making a dream come true." —Neymar

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Kabinet revamped

BY CLAY SANDHU

Kabinet, the pint-sized cocktail bar attached by the hip to Mile End’s favourite nightclub, Datcha, has recently undergone a major conceptual transformation. The former Russian watering-hole is leaving its cocktail club roots behind in favour of becoming a restaurant with a mid-century European identity. The key figures behind the transformation are the local architecture and design firm ADHOC in conjunction with former Tripes et Caviar head-chef Jean Michel Leblond. Having tripled in size during the renovation, the striking dining room bears almost no resemblance to its former self despite having been structured around some key pieces of the original design.

The interior design features an abundance of classic restaurant tropes: ornate art deco floor tiling, a tufted banquette upholstered in burgundy velvet — even a lavish crystal chandelier hangs in the charming bay-window alcove. It oozes Old World opulence verging on austerity but manages to avoid crossing the line into gaudiness. The idea, as it was explained to me when I first heard about the redesign, was that Kabinet was being transformed into a restaurant inspired by Paris in the ’70s. While there is an undeniable neoclassical bistro thing going on, the design language speaks with a heavy Slavic accent. The room is an artful assemblage of bold geometric shapes and richly hued primary colours. Perhaps the best examples are the dual domed banquettes, upholstered in a deep sapphire blue velvet, which frame either side of the neatly tiled open kitchen. It’s a taste of the encroaching return to maximalism and is archetypal mid-century Eastern European design. For me, it’s an absolute homerun.

On to the food. Conceptually, the menu is cleverly composed and reasonably affordable (if you skip the caviar, that is), which is appreciated at a time when food costs are sky-high. Oscillating between a full-fledged restaurant and a snack bar, the menu is broken up into a handful of distinct categories: small plates, salads, seafood, desserts and an entire section devoted to caviar service. It feels European in its construction and the dishes were clearly devised by a chef with an intimate understanding of restaurant culture. It’s worth clarifying, given that “European” as a descriptor is relatively benign, that the specific Europeanness I describe is a combination of France and a hearty mix of Central and Eastern Europe with an emphasis on Russia and Poland. Which is to say, its attitude is decidedly Parisian but its soul is Slavic.

The caviar service features fish eggs from different provenances (equally country of export as species of fish) and begins at a paltry \$40 for Spanish Herring roe (Caviar de Mújol) and quickly shoots up to \$183 for the good stuff: Antonius Oscietra Caviar from Poland (by way of Russia). I might have liked to see some Acadian Sturgeon Caviar from New Brunswick on offer, but it wouldn’t have altered my decision given that it happened to be nearly 40 degrees on the day I visited. We gave the caviar a miss.

Instead, my companion and I went for a selection of varied cold dishes to go with a well-chilled bottle of wine. We



Clay Sandhu

ordered the leek vinaigrette with whelks, the Hermitage salad, beef tartare, and a classic shrimp cocktail for good measure. The wine list, I am pleased to say, is excellent and filled with a wide array of great producers making wine in classic and unconventional styles and at prices that nearly any budget can accommodate. Since the theme of the night seemed to be something along the lines of an Eastern European revival, I opted for a bottle of 2020 Rizling from Strekov1075 in Slovakia: a perplexingly full-bodied white wine with powerful yet well-integrated acidity and plenty of savoury notes that allow it to carry itself between dishes without getting lost. The wine, much like Kabinet itself, was surprisingly elegant, flamboyant in some ways and restrained in others, and ultimately an authentic representation of its roots and influences.

The meal led off with the two seafood dishes. The leeks came served on antique china and were cut in roughly two-inch sections and topped with a scattering of halved whelks (a type of sea-snail, for the unfamiliar) under a blanket of “vinaigrette,” which I was told was made of a reduction of clam juice. For a dish whose components could be described as shades of beige, it had a wonderfully appetizing appearance. A special point of appreciation goes to a dusting of what I thought was leek ash but what turned out to actually be sumac, which provided a nice touch of acidity from an unexpected source. Though the leeks were tender and the sauce, which was reminiscent of clam chowder, was surprisingly good, the whelks were far too rubbery and the dish as a whole lacked seasoning. It was a clever rendition in some respects but not entirely successful in its execution.

The shrimp cocktail was about as classic a presentation as you could ask for: six plump shrimp arranged around the rim of a short-stemmed coupe filled with a horseradish-flecked cocktail sauce and a lemon cheek. The shrimp were cooked quite nicely but the cocktail sauce had a bit too much going on. The ketchup-based sauce is a strange concoction to begin with, but it’s a sauce that’s far more than the sum of its parts. Kabinet’s version, as far as I can tell, made an attempt to improve or elevate the sauce by adding lemon zest and capers, and by its hue, I would guess additional tomato as well (though I could be wrong). In any case, the capers and lemon zest threw the balance off for me by making it slightly briny and overly perfumed. My advice: if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.

Next to arrive was a beef tartare made with 90-day dry-aged beef, and it was a certified hit. In its essence, it’s a very classic tartare — with mustard, Worcestershire, hot sauce and cornichons — but it’s been prepared with a level of subtlety and restraint that it feels very light. Without the fat of mayonnaise or richness of egg yolk, the flavour of the beef really comes through. I also quite liked the substitution of hearty endive leaves for toast on a hot summer day; had it been winter I might have said otherwise, but on that day it was perfect. It was also the first dish of the night for which the seasoning was spot-on.

Accompanying the tartare was the Hermitage salad, which is also known as Salade Olivier or Russian salad. The iconic dish traces its roots back to 1860’s Russia where Belgian-born chef Lucien Oliver created the dish for Moscow’s famed Hermitage restaurant. Throughout its history, the dish has gone through countless permutations and might include everything from lobster to bologna. Most, however, would agree the essential ingredients are potato, peas and a good helping of mayonnaise. Kabinet’s version of the salad leans toward a traditional potato salad, combining Yukon Gold potatoes with smoked duck, fresh green peas, capers, green olives and dill all somethered in delightfully creamy mayo and topped with a hefty dollop of Mújol caviar. The dish is a success aside from two small complaints. The first: the potatoes were mealy. It’s a shame, really and despite not severely detracting from the overall success of the dish, the famously buttery texture of Yukon Golds were lost to a potato that tasted like it had been in the fridge just a bit too long. The second: the cuts were too big. For some of the ingredients, like the potato and duck, a large cut makes sense. You get to enjoy the texture of the duck and tenderness of a well-cooked potato, but the massive chunks of briny olives and jarring acidity of the near half-inch cubes of dill pickles weren’t just pops of acidity, they brought you out of the dish. Despite liking all the ingredients and knowing that they work very well together, I found the preparation to be too rustic. It’s worth remembering the the origins of this dish are of finesse and sophistication. While Russian salad might be kitsch today, it was once a dish of grand repute. I think the same ingredients treated with a bit more technique and a bit more reverence would yield a truly sensational dish.

To finish, we opted for the ricotta crème brûlée. I have to admit that after we ordered it, I was convinced it would be bad — not every dish needs an alteration. There is beauty in tradition and skill in restraint. In this instance, however, I ate my words. Underneath the golden brûlée was a beautifully flavoured ricotta whipped until it had all the texture of the silkiest custard. It was fragrant, balanced and utterly delicious. I’ll resist saying it was an improvement on the original but it was certainly a very good version and easily the dish of the night.

Though not everything was perfect at Kabinet that evening, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. The room is exquisite, such a welcome departure from the typical restaurant design in town; the cocktails remain good; the wine list is excellent; the food, though not amazing, is still very decent and shows plenty of potential — I have no doubt that it will only improve over time. It opens early (4 p.m. most days) and stays open late (1 a.m. during the week and 3 a.m. on weekends) and it has a bar licence, which means you’re as welcome to come for a drink as you are for a meal. It’s convivial, beautiful and accessible, and for those reasons alone, Kabinet firmly gets my stamp of approval.

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music

Darkwave horror



Boy Harsher

Courtney Brooke

BY STEPHAN BOISSONNEAULT

Over the past decade, synthwave — a genre that dominated 1980s video game and movie soundtracks — has been making a steady comeback. Actually, it never truly died out, but was limited to niche circles as grunge took over the world. In recent years, however, a legion of fresh synthwave bands have made their way onto the charts and into clubs, with even more mainstream pop artists, like the Weeknd, dipping their toes in.

One duo riding this wave and slowly manipulating it over time with their diverse soundscapes is Boy Harsher. Made up of vocalist Jae Matthews and electronic soundscaper Augustus Muller, you could call their sound darkwave — blending the gothic industrial sounds of Sisters of Mercy with the more modern lush waves of someone like Beach House.

They have always been heavily inspired by the art of film, creating soundtracks for non-existent movies, but for their latest release, *The Runner*, they actually had the opportunity to create their own.

“It’s always been our dream to make a film,” says Muller over the phone. “And with COVID cancelling all of the touring opportunities for us at the time, we finally had the

time to make one.”

Boy Harsher was already in the process of making what they call a “wacky COVID album,” but quickly found themselves once again writing a dark soundtrack to a film.

“It was very difficult to write music for the club, because at that time, it seemed like clubs and those types of concerts were going to be extinct,” says Matthews. “So we experimented and pretended to write a soundtrack for a film idea and it evolved into actually filming something.”

Written and directed by Boy Harsher, *The Runner* was released by Shudder back in January. It’s a short film that follows an unnamed, speechless woman (the eponymous Runner, played by Kristina Esfandiari of the doom metal group King Woman) as she silently rampages through an unsuspecting country town, haunted by bloody, vague memories and sinister motivations. The film also splices in live performances and music videos from Boy Harsher, and at times acts as a documentary about the duo’s musical inspiration.

“I think the music we’re always making sounds like it would mesh well with a good noir or scary movie, so with *The Runner*, it just made sense,” Matthews says. “We also incorporated some of the characters we’ve created over the years that never made it onto the screen.”

One of these characters is credited as the “the Desperate Man,” whom the Runner calls and listens to over the telephone as she ruminates over the horror she just caused.

“I think Gus wrote him 10 years ago and he always found his way into our songs. Another is the lonely woman, and then,

of course, the Runner, who has crept into our music for some time,” Matthews says.

It’s hard to feel sympathy for the Runner in the film as she goes on what you could call a killing spree, even though the film gives a vague justification for her carnage. But at one point someone asks, “Do you see yourself in the Runner?” The question, directed at Matthews herself during the interview/documentary portion of the film, gives a feeling of stark terror because we never get her answer.

“I think if I take it literally, for me, then yes, of course, because I’ve been writing this character for so long, but the point of that question in the film is to suggest that everyone might see themselves in the Runner,” she says. “There’s always a part of you that is going to self-sabotage in order to get what you want, or, just like this prescription of desire, as a manifestation of something entirely destructive.”

Boy Harsher’s sojourn in the world of filmmaking may become more of an extended stay now that Matthews and Muller have a taste for it. So could there be a sequel to *The Runner*? The conclusion is left pretty open.

“I mean Jae and I are both ready to quit music and make music — I mean, films,” Muller says.

“That was a bit of a Freudian slip there,” Matthews laughs. “But seriously, I think the pandemic really gave us a perspective of what’s valuable in life. We love music, and there’s nothing more special than performing music for people who also enjoy it. But at the same time, it would be really nice to get back to our roots and produce some films.”

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WHY THIS COMMUNITY
NEWSPAPER MATTERS:

Local businesses get post-pandemic **lift** from community papers

BY RUBY IRENE PRATKA

For small businesses around the country, the first abrupt lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic came as an existential shock. Restaurants had to shutter their dining rooms, and thousands – nearly 3,700 across Quebec at last count – closed for good. The hasty closures had a crippling effect on advertising, forcing many publications to cut costs – and, in turn, content. ➔

➔ Offering free advertising at such a difficult time may seem counterintuitive, especially for a new publication. However, that's exactly what *The 1019 Report*, a bi-weekly newspaper launched in May 2020 in Vaudreuil-Soulanges, decided to do.

"When local restaurants had to do take-out, we offered them three months of free advertising to get their phone numbers out there," said Brenda O'Farrell, editor-in-chief of *The 1019 Report* and a former *Montreal Gazette* news editor. "Normally, the local pizza place doesn't need to make an extra effort to put their phone number out there, but at this time, they did."

O'Farrell says the promotion didn't necessarily give rise to long-term paid advertising. That was not the point. It did, however, help establish the paper as a publication that had the community's interests at heart. "In a crisis, if your house is on fire, I want to be the neighbour who runs over and says, 'I can aim my garden hose at your roof,'" O'Farrell said.

“

The situation shook everyone up, but it made us think about the importance of local media. People understand it now and realize we'd be lesser without it.

~ NIKKI MANTELL, THE LOW DOWN

”

The feature, dubbed *Take Care, Take Action and Take Out*, won a Quebec Community Newspaper Association Award for best community newspaper promotion.

The Low Down to Hull and Back News, in Wakefield, also turned its attention to supporting small businesses during the pandemic, even as it faced its own challenges due to lost advertising.

"We thought we were going to go under," recalled *Low Down* publisher Nikki Mantell.

In spring 2020, Mantell and her colleagues launched the *Low Down* business directory, titled *Shop Local, Folks!* They offered free 100-word advertising slots to dozens of local businesses in the *Low Down's* print edition and created a "distilled version" on the paper's website.

For Mantell, like O'Farrell, the goal of the campaign was not to pick up new paid advertisers, although the paper did add a few.

"We're a small semi-rural paper; the restaurants and boutiques are part of what makes our community great. People want to know about them and they need to get the word out," said Mantell, who calls the relationship between community newspapers and advertisers "symbiotic." She cites a recent reader survey indicating that 84 per cent of *Low Down* readers had patronized a local business after seeing an ad in the paper. "When you advertise in a local paper, you invest in the community, and the eyes that see your ad are people who pay to read about their community," Mantell said.

Steve Bonspiel is the editor and publisher of the *Eastern Door*, a community newspaper serving the Mohawk community of Kahnawake, south of Montreal. Like Mantell, he empathizes with local entrepreneurs who nearly lost their businesses early in the pandemic, because he also had to steer the paper through a rough patch. Throughout December 2020, he allowed local businesses and entrepreneurs to place free full-colour ads in the print edi-

tion. "We're a community of 8,000 people and everyone wants to start a business," Bonspiel said. "It can start with someone selling baked goods out of their house ... the businesses we supported were a little more established than that, but not

"It can start with someone selling baked goods out of their house...the businesses we supported were a little more established than that, but not much. They don't have a marketing or promotional budget, and we wanted to give them a boost."

~ STEVE BONSPIEL, THE EASTERN DOOR



much. They don't have a marketing or promotional budget, and we wanted to give them a boost." One of his goals is to find sponsors that would enable the *Eastern Door* to run the special section year round.

He hopes the next generation of Mohawk entrepreneurs are inspired by seeing their neighbours' beadwork or home cooking enterprises mentioned in the paper, even in a small ad. "It shows that if you're starting out with an idea, on your kitchen table, you can be whatever you set your mind to. If you have a little bit of help from community media, who knows what else could happen."

He believes that on Mohawk territory, community media plays a key role in fostering the local economy. "We can't just rely on tobacco and big business. We have to kindle that entrepreneurial spark at the beginning," he said.

The *Eastern Door* and the *Low Down* were also recognized by the Quebec Community Newspapers Association for their promotional campaigns.

Mantell tips her hat to local businesses that, early in the pandemic, proactively bought hundreds of dollars of advertising, or donated T-shirts for the paper to sell as a spontaneous fundraiser. "The pandemic was terrifying for all of us at first ... but we were really touched by the support," she said. "The situation shook everyone up, but it made us think about the importance of local media. People understand it now and realize we'd be lesser without it."

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The many saints of Manhattan

BY DARCY MACDONALD

Trying to talk around the fact that Michael Imperioli starred in a television show that changed the face of the genre is tricky.

But on the *Talking Sopranos* podcast that he and his former series co-star Steven Schirripa hosted over the span of the past two years, Imperioli revealed himself to be almost a walking encyclopedia of modern cinema and stage history.

So is his relationship with music in any way similar?

“I think I’m more into music than cinema, to be honest,” Imperioli said. “As a fan, I’m probably more of a fan of music, although I love cinema, and I’ve worked in cinema. What really gets me more obsessed is music and fiction, more than anything. Maybe music first.”

His band, Zopa, plays Montreal and Bar le Ritz PDB on Thursday, Aug. 25. The actor, writer, director and musician shared some time while filming season two of HBO’s *White Lotus* in Italy earlier this summer to tell us more about his history as a music fan.

Darcy MacDonald: What was your first connection to music?

Michael Imperioli: Somehow, when I was a kid, I wound up with this box of 45s. I had this little case for 45 records that had some Beatles, some Beach Boys, some Four Seasons. I don’t even know where I got it from or if they were my cousin’s or someone else’s, but I remember having them in my house. And I had a little record player that I would play them on.

I remember I made a radio show. I had a cassette tape recorder, which, when I got it, I thought was the most amazing thing. I was maybe seven or eight, or younger. And I would play the songs and then talk about them, even though I was probably just making up most of the details about the people I was playing. Because some of it was more obscure stuff (from the late ‘50s and early ‘60s. I remember one song was “I Want a Yul Brynner Haircut” which was like a novelty record.

DM: What was the first album you bought?

Imperioli: When I was 10, (I bought) a 12-inch of *A Night at the Opera*, which had come out that year. I had heard “Bohemian Rhapsody” on the radio and I was like, “What is this?” It was so bizarre. So I went to the record store and bought it. I listened to that album and studied it. There were only four headshots of the band. I spent a lot of time with that one.

Around that time, I started getting into the Beatles and buying all their records. You know, when I started listening to the Beatles, it was only six or seven years after they had broken up, which is bizarre, because even back then, it seemed like ancient history. When they broke up I was three or four. When you’re nine years old, being three seems like a lifetime ago! The Beatles seemed like another era that I had no connection with, time-wise.

But it was only six or seven years! That’s nothing. It’s like comparing now to 2016, which seems like yesterday to me now. It’s weird looking back at the way you process time when you’re a kid.

DM: What are your memories of John Lennon’s death?

Imperioli: I was 14 and big into the Beatles, still. We were



Zopa

Andrzej Liguz

sitting around the table watching the news. It was so strange and sad. It seemed surreal. I actually live about half a block from where he lived.

The window from my desk looks at his old house, which is pretty wild. So I think of him a lot. I was in the park on his birthday in October, which was really nice. It’s not organized, but it’s really nice. All these people just come together in Strawberry Fields and play Beatles songs and sing together. All ages, all colours. Hundreds of Beatles fans. It’s really beautiful.

DM: So then as you get older, and you’re hanging around New York, what’s going on? And how does your relationship with music grow?

Imperioli: Up until high school, I didn’t live in the city. And it was very much classic rock radio. The first concert I went to see was Jethro Tull. I wasn’t exposed to anything beyond what was happening on the rock radio stations at the time. But then I finished high school and started spending all my time in Manhattan. (I had a friend) who had been a DJ at Boston College. He had seen all these new bands and I think his station had set up a lot of concerts, touring bands like REM, Echo & the Bunnymen, U2 and all of that early ‘80s stuff that was happening.

Through him, I started learning about New York punk, which I got attracted to right away. The Ramones were still playing now and then and I saw them.

And then the bands I just mentioned, REM and U2, were also really important to me at that time. In about ‘85, we went to the Live Aid concert in Philadelphia, and that was really exciting. And I got into Lou Reed around the same time. He was always a big influence on me.

Right around that time, I started playing in a band called Black Angus, which was a no-wave band in New York City. We played some shows and wrote some songs but never recorded anything.

I bought a nylon string acoustic guitar because it was the cheapest one in the store. I didn’t really know anything about guitars. The bass player and the other guitarist had electric guitars. But I figured if I just put it in front of a microphone, it would sound kind of similar. And I realized it didn’t.

So I bought a pickup which I glued to it and plugged in, and started figuring out ways to make weird sounds with the amplifier. I could play decent rhythm but I didn’t know anything else. So I’d do that and try to find interesting sounds. Then they brought in another guy and he hated playing with me because I didn’t know what I was doing. I was trying to make sounds. That was kind of the end for me. He knew how to play, I didn’t, and I didn’t really care!

Zopa started in 2006 (with drummer Olmo Tighe and bassist Elijah Amitin). I was playing on my own and making demos and stuff. But I realized I really missed playing with people.

They were really great from the beginning but I was still figuring stuff out. Being the guitar player in a trio rather than the rhythm player in a band with two other guitarists was a

thing I had to figure out. It was the first time I was singing and playing. I was very limited in terms of how to play lead guitar. (But) right from the beginning, it was exactly what I had hoped for.

I actually took a couple of lessons with Richard Lloyd from the band Television. He taught me how to practise. And I put in a lot of time trying to figure that out, playing a lead the way I wanted to, or the way I could play it. The early (Zopa) shows were primitive, but we played a lot of shows. We played wherever they would have us.

DM: Do you think your acting skills are at all transferable to music?

Imperioli: Acting skills come more with the performance, both live and in the studio, and the way you commit emotionally to the material in a script or music. In acting, you commit with your body and voice, and in music, with your instrument and the way you sing. But the difference between committing authentically, emotionally, or not...I mean in acting, that’s what you go for!

For practising, it’s just learning to be disciplined, learning scales and learning how the notes are laid out on a fretboard and how they interact, and proper hand and finger positioning. That kind of knowledge lends itself to being able to do more lead guitar work. When I was 20, I wouldn’t have had the discipline.

DM: What are some of your favourite soundtracks to films you’ve been part of?

Imperioli: *Goodfellas* had a really good soundtrack. *Summer of Sam* did, too. I liked a lot of the songs that Spike (Lee) used.

I loved what they were doing with the music on *The Sopranos*. For TV, it was really new and cool. David (Chase) really wanted to bring that cinematic feel for music into television, and it hadn’t really been done.

My favourite music on the show was probably when they used Johnny Thunders’ “You Can’t Put Your Arms Around a Memory.” But there are so many good moments. There’s a lot of Van Morrison.

One of my favourite movie soundtracks is a movie Al Pacino did in, I think, 1980 called *Cruising*. It was a very controversial movie because it’s about a serial killer in the gay, kind of S&M, anonymous sex subculture in Greenwich Village.

There were a lot of protests when they were making it because the gay community was really upset that they were making a movie about a gay killer. It was a ballsy movie for Pacino to make.

But the music, the soundtrack to that movie, has a lot of Willy Deville and other stuff like that. It was kind of just at the end of punk, and it’s just really cool — one of the best soundtracks of a movie ever.

→ Zopa plays with openers Patrick Holland and Karma Glider at Bar le Ritz PDB (179 Jean Talon W.) on Thursday, Aug. 25, 8 p.m., \$26.80

Montreal's queen of country



Brittany Kennell

BY ERIK LEJON

When Brittany Kennell left Montreal to pursue music education at Berklee in Boston and then country dreams in Nashville over a decade ago, it wasn't a well-trodden path.

But like the canon that inspired her, Kennell made something out of three chords and the truth. She plied her trade like so many aspiring acts in America's country music capital, honing her craft as a songwriter and enjoying life's detours until 10 refined slices of life emerged in the form of *I Ain't a Saint*, her confident, funny and heartfelt 2021 debut album. It's a country release through and through.

The West Islander now lives in Lachine, and instead of returning as a big fish to a small pond, the country music market that seemed so elusive when she left has arrived on her doorstep: after two years of pandemic-related delays, Montreal's inaugural country music shindig Lasso is finally here this August. Big U.S. stars Luke Bryan and Dierks Bentley are headliners.

"It feels like my two worlds are colliding," said Kennell. "When I moved to Nashville, it was because I wanted to find country music and there wasn't much here. Now we're seeing the city embrace it."

With an extra two years of waiting, Kennell had time to think about that moment when she'll step on stage at Parc Jean-Drapeau and see all those cowboy hats in the crowd.

"I think it's going to be a really powerful moment for me," she said. "I'm going to be sharing the music I love in the city that I love."

Kennell's home will always be Montreal, but Nashville will never stop calling. She still visits every few months to hang with friends and partake in songwriting sessions. There's a businesslike aspect to music making in Nashville, and songwriters of all stripes like to meet up with other writers

speed-dating style to see if there's any magic

Kennell even does Zoom songwriting sessions time to time, and some tracks from *I Ain't a Saint* via a screen collaboration. (Kennell also re-recorded four songs off *I Ain't a Saint* in stripped down, traditional Americana style, for an EP released earlier this year.)

also noticed that perceptions of Nashville have changed over the years. These days, it's unofficially the bachelorette party capital North America and the sweaty honkytonks are a necessary pilgrimage. Among others, Taylor played a huge role in introducing the genre to masses.

"When I first went, people back home didn't necessarily realize there was such a scene down there," Kennell recalled. "It's come full circle. Nashville is such a hot city now. Every week I someone telling me they plan on visiting and I've my itinerary ready for them to check out."

Informing people about what's cool in Nashville easy. Kennell said new restaurants keep popping Not unlike Montreal, rents keep rising there, while she was once able to balance work and songwriting, today it would be difficult to find an affordable living situation suitable for an artist.

accomplished a lot in her time there, including a on NBC singing contest *The Voice*, where she naturally joined up with Blake Shelton's squad, performed at the illustrious Grand Ole Opry and Bluebird Café. Back home, she often sings the national anthem at Canadiens games. While country artists tend to stick to a lane of either performing or writing, Kennell enjoys both and

wouldn't discount writing behind the scenes should the opportunity present itself.

Returning home as an experienced country act exposed her to something she hadn't expected: the colourful world of country and folk music fests across the country that have long existed, but thrive slightly off the beaten path.

A major exception is the well-known Calgary Stampede, where Kennell performed recently. Quebec's equivalent is the Festival Western de St-Tite, just over two hours east of Montreal. Held this September, it's a big enough deal that Johnny Cash once performed there.

"I didn't know there were so many great festivals just outside of Montreal," Kennell said. "I was at the Gala Country (award show for francophone country music) and I couldn't believe my eyes and ears. They were blending traditional country with new sounds."

A little closer to Quebec City, Festival Country Lotbinière in Saint-Agapit left a big impression on the artist.

"One of the biggest crowds I've ever played to was there," she said. Last month she was at Festival Country-Western de Saint-Gabriel, then it's off to Festival Western de Saint-André-Avellin.

"They're rodeo festivals, and they're a lot of fun," she added.

The most obvious example of how Quebec's love of country music was hidden in plain sight all this time, Kennell now lives near famed Lachine line dancing club le Honkytonk. In case you were wondering, this cultural jewel survived the pandemic.

"They do line dancing at the canal, it's awesome," Kennell said. "Of course I ended up living near a honky tonk. I haven't been inside, but I'm on the Facebook group. I've stood in front and watched them dance and have fun, so I really need to just jump in there and do it."

Lasso Montreal is happening at Parc Jean-Drapeau, Aug. 12-13, two-day passes \$220-\$535

Three more Canucks to catch at Lasso



Five Roses

These picks are coming from an avowed Jimmy Buffett fan, though I can appreciate the "new sound" of modern country, which plucks from classic rock and even hip-hop/pop productions. But give me the mavericks any day!

Tenille Townes

Grand Prairie, Alberta's own is arguably the biggest Canadian export in radio country, depending on what you think about Orville Peck (and that's a discussion left for another day). Her 2022 EP *Masquerades* came out on famed imprint Columbia Nashville, and there's definitely a sleek, adult pop appeal to her sound and lyrics. (Aug. 12, 6:05 p.m., Scène de la prairie Coors)

Five Roses

Who woulda thunk Montreal's iconic illuminated sign could also double as an appropriate country duo name? New country popsters Jade Godin and Zach Ouimet have an easygoing chemistry on the new single "Feel Good," with just enough underlying twang to get you bobbing with your beer in your lawn chair. These are tunes made for a chill August evening on the island. An EP is coming in 2022. (August 13, 2:35 p.m., Scène Lasso Bell)

Sara Dufour

Along with Léa Jarry, this singer from Dolbeau-Mistassini is a welcome francophone addition bringing something a little different to the lineup. In truth, her trad twist — comparable to Acadian fun-loving folkie stars Lisa Leblanc and P'tit Belliveau — will make her stand out at Lasso more than language, but her hit song is about baseball, so there's more in common than you think. (Aug. 12, 4:15 p.m., Scène du ranch Coca-Cola)



Tenille Townes

Songs as lifesavers



Julia Jacklin

Nick McK

BY SRUTI ISLAM

Julia Jacklin recently walked into a café in Thornbury, Melbourne and heard her music playing on the speakers. Given that the singer/songwriter is known particularly for her intimate lyrics, gutting and all-baring performances, and songs that generally swell with raw emotion, one can only imagine the humility felt by the introvert in that moment. It was humbling, but a jarring disconnect all the same. One evening (EST time zone for me), and morning (GST time zone for her), over a terrible internet connection, I made certain confessions to Jacklin over a video call.

In 2020, I found myself living in the suburbs with my parents, confronting the end of a five-year relationship. Hard as it was, the bad thing that never seems to end started at about the same time. I am grateful every day for the serendipity that brought Jacklin's music into my life at that precise moment. A time when her use of the word "isolation" in "Pressure to Party" — a song about not knowing how to navigate running into your ex — hit, not only close to, but directly into my suburban home.

Of course, this is how all her fans feel about her work, regardless of their own moment of encounter. Unsurprisingly, audiences predominantly filled with women flock to the musician's confidentiality. I compare her songwriting to that of artists like Fiona Apple, whose fans similarly feel emboldened by songs intended as pep talks for the musician herself, not necessarily public audiences.

Does she feel a difference between singing for herself and singing to all of us? "I think I'm lucky in that each time I've made a record, there's enough of a gap in between touring that I can almost forget that I'm slightly famous, so I can sort of directly focus on the music. Truthfully, that has changed a little bit more. I think I've actually gotten more candid in my

songwriting with every record, because I'm just at a point now where it's like, why not?"

"You should cover 'Extraordinary Machine,'" I say.

"I used to, all the time!" she says.

After a long absence, Jacklin returns to her fans this year with the gift of a new album: *Pre-Pleasure*. Admitting it was a title she had to settle on purely based on a deadline (similarly, she says she knows when a song is done — when it's due), she notes that, for her, the album explores the idea of "trying to approach relationships, you know, romantic, or platonic, and how to figure that out with this idea that once that's done, you can kind of one day just enjoy your life and enjoy your relationship. But the reality is, you can't get to that place, and I think it's kinda scary when you realize that you've operated your whole life like that. Do you get to a certain point that's just like pure pleasure? It's really not like that in many ways. A lot of stuff is going to be kinda ongoing until you're no longer alive (laughs)."

Jacklin's work has persistently explored physicality and sex. This emerges on *Pre-Pleasure* too: "Ignore Tenderness" croons in advising the listener to "be naughty, but don't misbehave." A song like "Magic" captures Jacklin's particular skill in inflating the tension of a melody, until it bursts with an uncooked account of intimate sex. Women of my generation are congregating to what she's revealing but is otherwise not being said about our intimate lives.

"So many of my early sexual experiences were, in retrospect, quite traumatic and shrouded in shame and I had no understanding that it could involve my own pleasure. Even when you think that you are in this incredibly, like, open and progressive society—in order to be that confident person, you still have to do such deep, deep, active work to find yourself. I think this is just something I think about a lot.

What is Jacklin's favourite song about sex, I wonder, and am gifted with a brief moment where she sings directly on screen: "'Why Must We Wait Until Tonight' by Tina Turner. It's so sexy and confident."

And if she, like all the reviews say, is in fact a combination of Doris Day and Britney Spears, what's her favourite Britney tune? "'I'm Not a Girl, Not Yet a Woman,' written by Dido, in fact."

Given her massive lyrical skill, is she a reader? "I'm a big reader. I'm currently reading Samantha Irby."

As it turns out, Julia Jacklin also loves karaoke: "I do Celine Dion's, 'It's All Coming Back to Me Now' a lot."

Pre-Pleasure features songs mostly written in Canada and, in fact, *Pre-Pleasure* is a record produced in Montreal. A "beautiful city," she says, "that has such rich musical history. I was still in Australia for most of the pandemic. I basically didn't even pick up an instrument most of that time. I definitely didn't miss the stage, since I was so incredibly burned out from the last tour. And then when I moved to Montreal, I began to start working on music again. But I also got to actively live in the city and experience it outside of work. I would bike around, which is sort of crazy in Montreal," she says, noting our infamous construction. "It's like a new route everyday!"

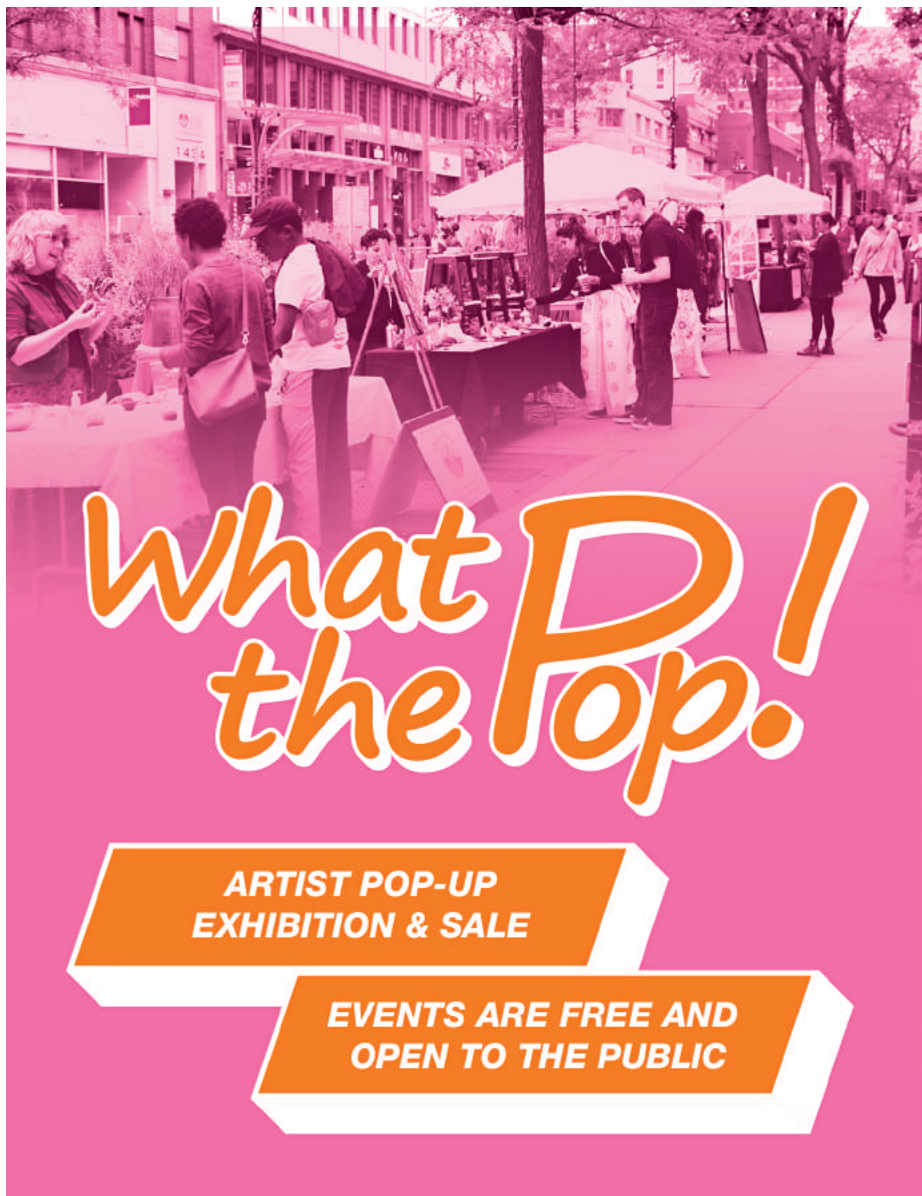
"But yes, there's absolutely a creative energy in Montreal. I think what I always really liked about it, especially coming from Sydney and having lived there for a really long time, was that it always seemed to be a city that liked artists. I liked that Montreal was quite loud, for instance. People aren't precious about noise like they are in Sydney. People in Sydney complain about noise all the time, which just doesn't really go well for musicians. I could just sit by my apartment window in Montreal, and always hear something. I feel like when I went for a walk or when I was in the city, it just felt like I could always hear things. You could feel a sort of vibrancy. And Montreal buildings are all painted on. I always thought that was a good indication of a creative city."

Jacklin fans unite and rebel against the cliché of "sad girl music," because, when I bring it up, she sighs, and says, "I have definitely played into that because it feels like that's your box, but to be honest, I don't even know what that means."

"Girls have been sad forever! It's not new!" I say.

"Read the news! Like, what's there not to be sad about? *Everyone's* sad (laughs). It's literally just a part of being human. To be alive is to be sad," or, as she sings on, "Ignore Tenderness," to be "brave, a little leaf catching a wave, strong but willing to be saved."

→ Julia Jacklin plays with opener Katy Kirby at Théâtre Corona (2490 Notre-Dame W.) on Sept. 20, 8 p.m., \$32



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Album reviews



Steve Lacy, *Gemini Rights* (RCA)
In a world that feels like it has too few of them, Steve Lacy is a true young musical wunderkind. On his sophomore album, *Gemini Rights*, the 24-year-old Compton multihyphenate — a singer, songwriter, guitarist and producer — only needs 35 minutes to create an album

that's quite ostensibly about a breakup, but ironically feels tailor-made for sunny days in the park. Lacy also shows himself to be equally comfortable singing about getting fucked on drugs as he is crooning about wooing a love interest. The follow-up to 2019's Grammy-nominated *Apollo XXI* sees Lacy's warm, psychedelic take on bedroom pop and neo-soul go to bolder and more intimate places.

Sleepy piano-driven opener "Static" is a pristine tone-setter for the post-breakup rumination — one alternating between regret and fury — that acts as the album's core theme, while lead single "Mercury" is basically a straight-up Bossa nova track. "Bad Habit," the second single (and clear standout) from the album, lies musically somewhere between Mac DeMarco, Blood Orange and Prince. The ominous, synth-heavy "Cody Freestyle" explores Lacy's struggle with codependency, and penultimate track "Sunshine," featuring R&B songstress Foushée, is sung from the perspective of both parties in a failed relationship. With *Gemini Rights*, Steve Lacy has solidified himself as a modern-day auteur by delivering a concise, captivating project that invites us into his journey through love loss, and adapting to change. 9/10 Trial Track: "Bad Habit" (Dave MacIntyre)



Superorganism, *World Wide Pop* (Domino)
Keeping your creative flow as a band can be challenging when only one member leaves, let alone three. For Superorganism, losing three members after their breakthrough 2018 self-titled debut reduced them to a five-piece, but hasn't diminished their

bubbly, psychedelic indie pop sound. The London-based outfit's sophomore LP, *World Wide Pop*, builds upon the band's TechniColor, youthful-sounding sonic palette while alternating lyrically between equal amounts of excitement and despair.

Their unique approach to sampling (especially of everyday sounds, such as single "Teenager"'s opening soundbite of a car engine starting), heavy use of features (CHAI, Pavement's Stephen Malkmus and British rapper Dylan Cartlidge, among others) on songs like "It's Raining" and "Into the Sun," and catchy pop hooks (the breezy "On & On" is up there among the band's most infectious tunes) are each on full display here.

Attempts at expanding their sound don't always land — lead vocalist Orono Noguchi overdoes it with the Auto-Tune on "crushed.zip," while other songs can feel a touch overproduced and boasting one too many ideas — but the band nonetheless sounds bigger, brighter and more confident, especially on summer-ready tunes like "Solar System" and opener "Black Hole Baby." Even if *World Wide Pop* is a bit front-loaded and could've used a couple more earworms to make it truly stack up to their buzz-making debut, Superorganism still show they can keep nurturing and growing their vibrant, endearingly cartoonish musical identity. 8/10 Trial Track: "On & On" (Dave MacIntyre)



Spaceman Dela and Hardbody Jones, *Nobody Teaches You to Come Down EP* (Slepton)
An easygoing collaborative effort between a couple of convivial cosmic travellers. The multi-faceted Hardbody's productions flutter and glisten with supple R&B guitars and warm percussion, while mystic MC Spaceman

jumps into his verses with aplomb, like every beat on the six-track EP provided a Eureka moment in the studio. The pairing is really where this project feels elevated: the duo unlocks moments where they really build off each other, as if they've tacitly given each other the go-ahead to keep stacking the deck. An extra bass flourish here, some added density to lyrical delivery there. 8/10 Trial Track: "Be You" (Erik Leijon)

Tyleen, *Majestic EP* (New Regime)
The inaugural release from local fashion brand New Regime's record label is from a familiar face: LaSalle rapper Tyleen Johnson, previously of Bonsound offshoot Make It Rain. No matter the label, Tyleen is confident in her bawdy, ball-busting approach, crushing opponents with aloofness and floating from stoned to sing-song flow with ease. Reunited with producer VNCE Carter of Dead Obies, there isn't necessarily a single calling card on the six-song EP that will jostle you — "U & I" with party starter Pahpay doesn't hit as expected — but Tyleen's personality comes through with flying colours. 7/10 Trial Track: "223 Freestyle" (Erik Leijon)

:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

Okay time travellers, better buckle up. Before I get to the gigs that are happening over the month of August, I really, really need to hip you L7's to a show coming up right after the September issue comes out.

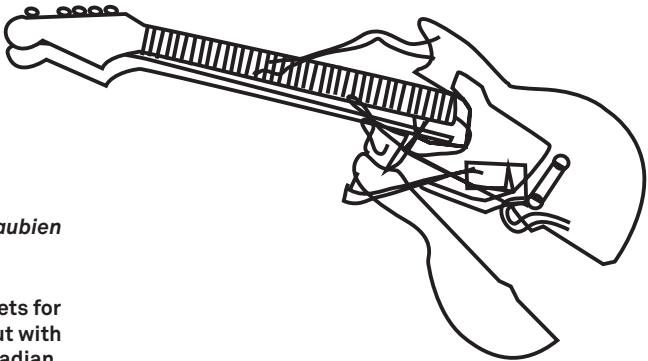
I have been burrowing deep into the soft bludgeoning of Montreal's post-rock boy band Christ and their masterful third record *Abhorre*. They will be launching this slow and brooding beast at Église Saint-Édouard on Sept. 3 with visual artist Phillipe Léonard turning your frontal lobes to mush. If that wasn't enough, my ultimate "drone bro" duo Nadja (uh, I guess technically only one bro, but with a descriptor like "drone bro"...who's counting?) will do an extremely rare show on this side of the pond. This will also be an album launch for Nadja. And if THAT wasn't enough, Big/Brave's professional hand model Mat Ball is also launching a record and will be performing his first solo show ever in the opening slot. If you dig your experi-metal rockage and wish Harold Budd played through a Marshall

full stack, you will not want to miss this one. 425 Beaubien E., doors 7 p.m., \$20

Sunday, Aug. 7: You will definitely need to grab tickets for Orville Peck as soon as you read this. This will sell out with walk-up, so if you want to squeeze into the best Canadian country crooner since Hank Snow, ya betta stop picking at it and grip those tix. Even with all of the hype being heaped on this former Vancouver punker, the kid can definitely deliver, every step of the way. Opening this show at Théâtre Corona is le Ren. 2490 Notre-Dame W., doors 7 p.m., \$65.45

Thursday Aug. 11: Does anybody remember when Isis absolutely killed at Sala two decades ago? Yeah, I thought not, but Isis's main boss-hoss Aaron Turner will return to town with his long-running project Sumac. Hometown heartthrobs Big/Brave take the middle slot, with Tashi Dorji opening. If you're stoked on the Christ/Nadja/Mat Ball gigger, you'll definitely want to show up for this one at Foufs. 87 Ste-Catherine E., doors 7 p.m., \$20/\$25

Sunday, Aug. 21: Admittedly, I don't really go for this next band I'm about to mention, and their fans are usually a bunch of tech puds, but I feel I need to mention that Rammstein are coming to Parc Jean-Drapeau to blow a bunch of shit up. Musically there isn't much that bends my ear here but as far as blowing up a bunch of shit, these guys are the fucking best. Dear Rammstein: If you ever got former Kiss six-string slinger Vinnie "The Onyxman" Vincent in your band, I would puncture my ear drums with standard size #2 pencils and

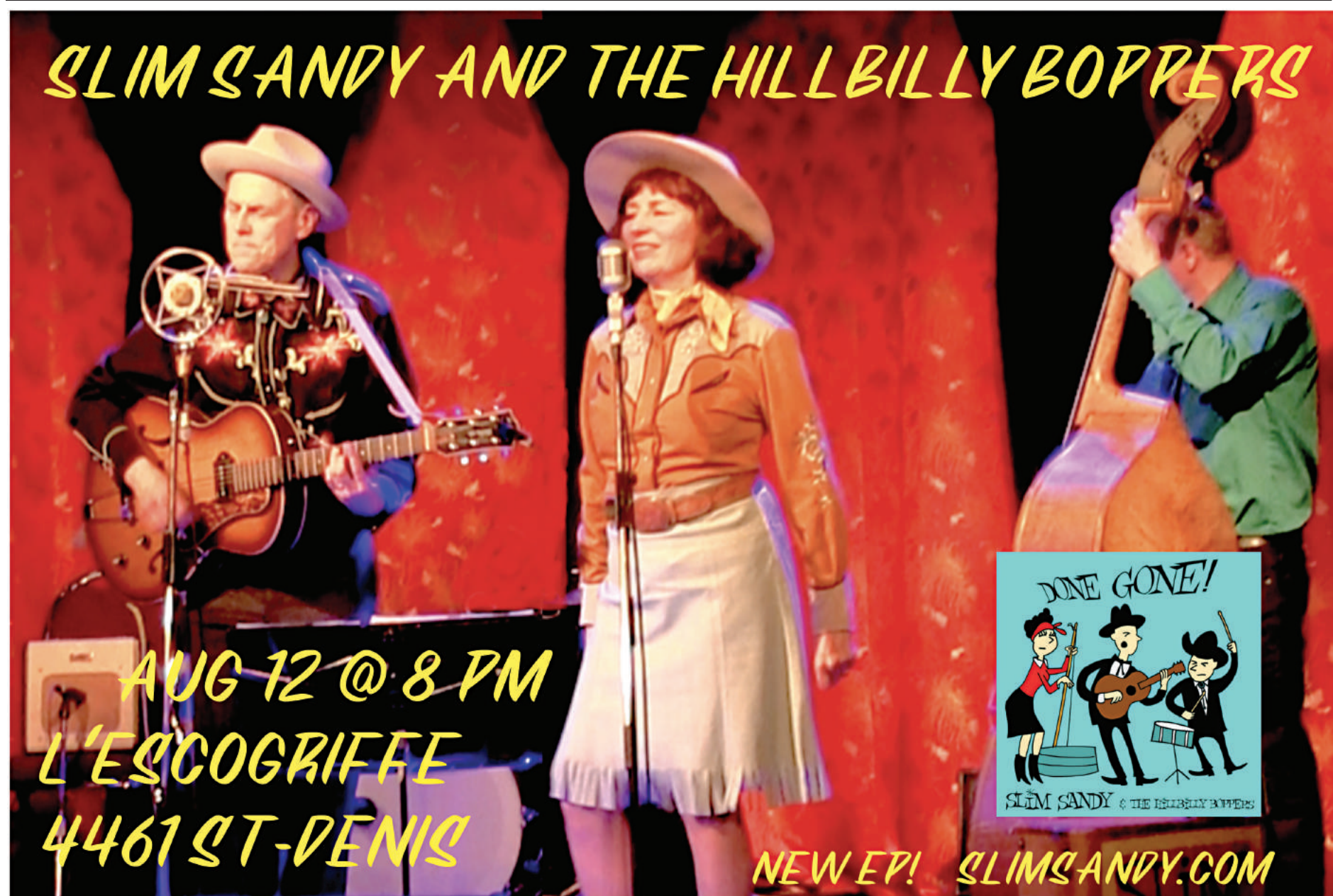


declare you the best band that ever stomped this mortal coil. 1 Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve, doors 5 p.m., \$120

Thursday, Aug. 25: Former Lollapalozers will definitely be digging the 420-friendly guitar jammers of the mighty Built to Spill, who will sheepishly rub their earth shoes into the stage at Théâtre Corona with Wetface and Blood Lemon. If guitar solos ain't yer bag, better steer clear. 2490 Notre-Dame W., doors 7 p.m., \$44

Friday, Aug. 26: For pure metal mayhem, you will definitely want to bow down to metal royalty when the At the Gates blast through their classic Swedish death metal sludge with party moshers Municipal Waste and young bucks Enforced at, you guessed it, Théâtre Corona. 2490 Notre-Dame W., doors 6:30 p.m., \$50

jonathan.cummings@gmail.com



A god walks into a rest-stop bathroom



Ryan Kwanten

BY JUSTINE SMITH

Three weeks into the pandemic, Rebekah McKendry and her husband David Ian McKendry received a script from a friend. “You’re going to go absolutely bonkers,” they were told.

Immediately they saw the potential and started reworking it and shopping it around. “It’s always been about a god in a bathroom, but we added more philosophy,” she explains over the phone. The script would become *Glorious*, a Lovecraftian horror film about a schlub named Wes who gets locked in a remote rest-stop bathroom with a mysterious stranger who may or may not be a living god.

The script reached Rebekah at just the right time. Unable to work in the film industry, she was rethinking life. “[My husband] was going to be a realtor, and I would be a yoga teacher. We were about to make these really grand life decisions because we felt we had nothing else. Instead, we channelled that energy into the film.”

Part of the script’s appeal is how limited it is: most of it takes place in a single location, and it’s centred on two characters, one of which is an omnipotent voice. Working with the limits imposed by the pandemic era, roadblocks suddenly became

opportunities. McKendry thought they might even be able to build the bathroom set in their garage.

The right casting was essential with so much riding on the two main characters. McKendry sent the script to her regular DP, Pietro Villani, to seek advice on how to shoot the film. He immediately suggested sending the script to J.K. Simmons. “They had worked together on a bunch of projects, and Pete said J.K. was a huge fan of Lovecraft. Literally 48 hours later, we heard back from J.K.’s people that he loved the project. After that, it’s like the wheels were suddenly in motion,” McKendry explains. “I remember my husband literally dancing around the table because J.K. Simmons read his work.”

Then came the casting of Wes, which was tricky. “It’s a chamber piece, and he’s carrying the whole movie,” McKendry says. “He had to be multifaceted to hit the funny and the scary moments. He had to be likeable even though you see him as this failed and schlubby man at the beginning.” McKendry had seen Ryan Kwanten act in some films by Joe Lynch and an episode of *Creepshow* co-starring Barbara Crampton. Lucky for them, Crampton had already signed on as a producer on *Glorious* at this point. She sent Kwanten the script, and by the next day, they were on a Zoom call talking. “He got the humour, and he got the absurdity of it. He knew exactly how to play it. And that was wonderful. We immediately were like, ‘He’s the one.’”

Many rehearsals between the actors had taken place when it

came to shooting the film. Though Kwanten was often alone on set, they all had an idea of Simmons’ tone and cadence in the role. One of the producers, Morgan Peter Brown (*American Crime Story*), is also an actor and had learned how to replicate Simmons’ line-reading. Unlike some larger blockbuster films that feel like actors are working on empty sound stages, the effect brought through this process and Kwanten’s presence is remarkably reactive and embodied.

The use of practical effects bolsters the naturalism and carnality of the film. “About 85% of it is done practically on set,” says McKendry. The effects were done at Russell Effects, an industry-leading company that worked on films like *The Ritual* and *The Night House*. “We had a limited budget, though, so we had to be creative with what we were showing,” says McKendry. “At the same time, it’s the *Jaws* concept. You never wanna show the whole shark in the first scene. We really knew that we had to keep it contained.”

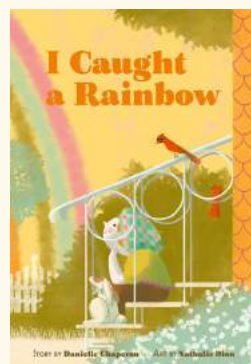
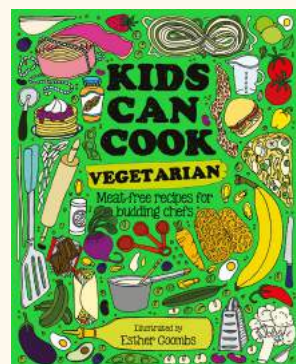
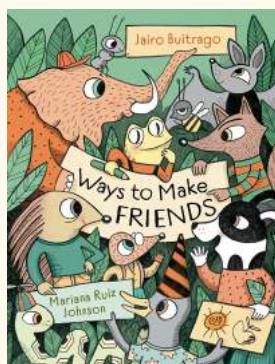
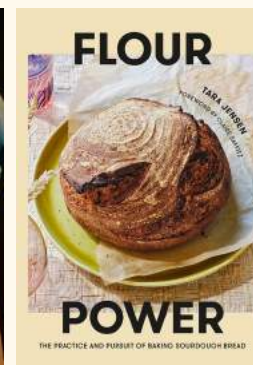
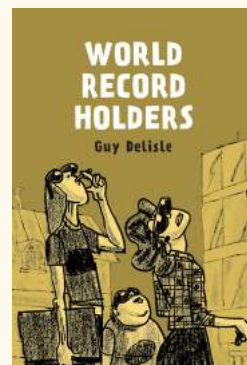
With much of the film made during the pandemic, the first time McKendry was able to see it with other people was at its world premiere last month at Fantasia. “Before the premiere, there were only five people in the same room. It was very isolating. When we did the final upload for the festival, I was alone in my room. So getting to see it with a crowd was really amazing.”

→ *Glorious* will stream on Shudder as of Aug. 18

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Image: Lindsay Fong

by AMANDA KELLOCK
with text from WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

On Screen



That Kind of Summer



Both Sides of the Blade



Easter Sunday



Bullet Train

BY JUSTINE SMITH

August is an action-packed month on the big screen with a handful of big-name action-thriller releases.

First is *Bullet Train* (Aug. 5), which has already been marketed within an inch of its life. Brad Pitt and company are a group of assassins trapped on a high-speed train in Kyoto. If trains aren't your thing, check out *Beast* (Aug. 19), which pits Idris Elba against a blood-thirsty lion. In *Breaking* (Aug. 26), John Boyega plays a desperate ex-marine who holds the occupants of a bank hostage. At the end of the month, Sylvester Stallone is also back with *Samaritan* (Aug. 26) about a former vigilante pulled out of retirement to save the city one last time.

If action isn't your thing, maybe you're up for some laughs? Jo Koy stars in *Easter Sunday* (Aug. 5), a comedic love letter to the comedian's family and the Filipino community. Released the same day, *I Love My Dad* (Aug. 5) stars Patton Oswalt as a hopelessly estranged father who catfishes his

son in an attempt to reconnect.

One of our most anticipated films of the year, Claire Denis's *Both Sides of the Blade*, hits theatres on Aug. 5. In this romantic thriller, frequent Denis collaborator Juliette Binoche is torn between two lovers, played by fellow Denis regulars Vincent Lindon and Grégoire Colin. Denis, who has made some of the best films of all time (including *Beau Travail*, *Les Salauds* and *Friday Night*), is always worth checking out on the big screen.

If you're looking for something the whole family can enjoy, the action-adventure *Secret Headquarters* (Aug. 5) is about a group of kids discovering the HQ of the world's most powerful superhero (Owen Wilson) beneath his home. In other kid-friendly entertainment, *Timescape* (Aug. 19) is about two kids who accidentally go back in time to the era of the dinosaurs and need to find a way to repair their ship and go home.

On the horror front, there are also a lot of options. A24 comes out with *Bodies, Bodies, Bodies* (Aug. 12), a Gen-Z murder mystery satire about youthful follies and obsessions. It

has a killer cast featuring Amandla Stenberg (*The Hunger Games*), Maria Bakalova (*Borat 2*), Rachel Sennott (*Shiva Baby*), Lee Pace and Pete Davidson. In *The Invitation* (Aug. 26), Evie is invited by an unknown cousin to a lavish wedding in the English countryside, only to find out she must fight to survive. Drawing on some very contemporary fears, in *Barbarian* (Aug. 31), a woman shows up at an Airbnb late at night only to find it's been double-booked and a strange man is already staying there.

For arthouse fans, Denis Côté's latest, *That Kind of Summer* (Aug. 19), hits cinemas mid-month. Sure to be divisive, this film follows the treatment of three women with sexual addiction. This is emotionally raw and sexually graphic cinema, so be prepared to have your limits tested.

And finally, one of the greatest films of all time returns to select Montreal theatres beginning Aug. 12. *Apocalypse Now: Final Cut* takes elements from the original theatrical release version and *Redux*, combining them for a new version. If you're a fan of Coppola, this is a must-see big screen experience.

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arts

Appreciation over appropriation



Xavier Watso



Digging Roots

BY SAVANNAH STEWART

Montreal's festival summer continues with the First Peoples Festival, aka *Présence autochtone*, taking place in Place des Festivals from Aug. 9 to 18.

The festival presents some of the best in Indigenous music and cinema from here and elsewhere, rounding out the programming with dance, theatre, circus and visual art.

"The program is so varied," says Xavier Watso, who is Abenaki from Odanak, Quebec, and the host of this 32nd edition of the festival. "There's something for everyone in it."

Watso is a high school teacher, proud Two-Spirit Indigenous activist and a TikTokker bringing the culture to over 40,000 followers on the video platform. It is the energy of young Indigenous people such as himself that this festival seeks to celebrate and promote.

"I'm lucky to have a platform to be able to help other people discover the festival who might not have had access to it in the sense that they know it exists, but they don't think it's meant for them. I'm in a position where I can invite them to participate."

And the participation of those who are not Indigenous is welcome and needed — just like during powwow season, another type of event Watso says settlers often express uncertainty about being "allowed" to attend.

"Some people ask the same question about the festival, they're worried it's not meant for them. But the answer is yes, of course, it's important to come, discover and appreciate,

because it's in those moments that there's a cultural appreciation, as opposed to cultural appropriation," he says.

In a schedule with over 50 films, there's a lot to choose from. Some short, others feature length, and there's a mix between documentary and fiction. Most of the screenings will take place at Cinéma du Musée in the Museum of Fine Arts.

Some of the standouts include two feature-length Bolivian films that have been well received at film festivals around the world: *El gran movimiento* and *Utame*. Both screenings will be Montreal premieres, bringing contemporary concerns and realities of Bolivia's majority Indigenous population to the forefront.

A notable local production is Caroline Monnet's *Bootlegger*, starring Devery Jacobs of Kahnawake. The film takes place in a northern Indigenous village in Quebec, where its residents are debating whether allowing the sale of alcohol in their dry community will address the violence and underage drinking that plagues them. Generations, cultures and intentions clash as the community envisions a future of self-determination.

The documentary *Mary Two-Axe Earley: I Am Indian Again* presents an intimate depiction of a woman behind a major change for the rights of Indigenous women. Two-Axe Earley was a leading force behind the push to return Indian status to women who had married non-status men, and she hailed from Montreal's neighbouring community of Kahnawake.

There's also *Kimmapiiyipitssini: The Meaning of Empathy*, which chronicles the Kainai Nation's uphill battle against addiction and the culturally sensitive ways prevention workers are trying to help users in the community. The film makes a compelling argument for harm-reduction

approaches to addiction and charts a path forward for addiction treatment in Indigenous communities.

Place des Festivals will come to life during *Présence autochtone* with a full schedule of headlining evening shows and more laid back, celebratory and traditional programming during the day.

The main music attractions kick off on Aug. 10 with acclaimed Inuit/Mohawk singer Beatrice Deer, whose "inuindie" sound and Inuktitut singing were most recently heard on her 2021 album *SHIFTING*, and Anishinaabe musician Leonard Summer, known for fusing many styles with his distinct sound. Another highlight on the main stage is the Juno award-winning duo Digging Roots, performing on Aug. 12.

"These artists are very involved in furthering Indigenous issues. They're not just here to sing nice and pretty; they have a message," says André Dudemaine, artistic director for the festival and the founder of Land InSights.

On Aug. 11, SiriusXM presents this year's edition of *Musique Nomade*'s annual show, presenting a full schedule of established and emerging Indigenous musicians. Some on the list are Matiu and Native Mafia Family.

For visual arts, renowned musician Buffy Sainte-Marie will have work displayed along Ste-Catherine Street, allowing viewers to see a new side to the singer through her less known visual body of work. There will also be art exhibited at the Maison du développement durable (50 Ste-Catherine W.) and projected onto the front of the Grande Bibliothèque.

→ For the complete list of events and ticket information, please visit presenceautochtone.ca



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Two Montreals, pt. 2



BY RYAN ALEXANDER DIDUCK

Every cultural scene needs people who work behind the scenes, people who make things happen, those unsung heroes who don't necessarily enjoy the limelight, who rarely take the spotlight, but without whom their scene wouldn't be as rich, and possibly wouldn't exist at all.

In July there were, once again, two amazing events that took place in two very different Montreals. Somehow, I was fortunate enough to have attended them both and will report forthwith. A caveat up front, though: This report strives first and foremost for accuracy, not flattery. A writer lives through the truth just like everyone else — the sad, happy truth — and it is the writer's dutiful responsibility to tell it like it is. Not like everyone else. There is no greater gift than an accurate rendering, I hope, since nobody ever sees themselves.

The first event, an outdoor experimental cinematic affair that overtook Place de la Paix one evening, was a screening of Chris Marker's 1997 film *Level Five*. Not the feel-good movie of the summer, mind you, but the crowd of about 100 people was diverse and peaceful. Nevertheless, I was only there for the soundscapes; Montreal's ever-ready musicians and pals Jonathan Parant, Jean-Sebastian Truchy and Roger Tellier-Craig provided the film's electronic score.

Events like this one could never happen if not for the frequent participation of these three bright stars. But it was the appearance of a man called Oliver Mitchell that completed the constellation.

I don't know Mitchell well, but everyone who has been to a show in the past two decades knows Oliver. What I do know is that Oliver can be seen at almost every gig involving this particular crew of musicians. Just as

much as the band, Oliver makes these things go. There are no other Olivers. There is only Oliver.

As the two of us shook hands, the lads onstage poked at their laptops and sipped tall cans, and Mitchell told me how he weathered the pandemic. It struck me that the past two years were particularly tough on Oliver, because going to shows like this has always been a significant part of his life. And mine. And many peoples'. But especially Oliver's.

While the performers managed to continue making music in their home studios, and I continued to consume and write about it online, the audience — the live audience like Oliver — did not continue to receive that music in its proper, live context, surrounded by other people. We all suffered for that. Still, something seemed right with the world again now that the stars were back in place.

The second event in this chronicle, and the second in the Concordia-sponsored evenings held in Pierrefonds dubbed "Recapturing the Magic of the Musical Salon," was another private aristocratic extravaganza of classical music for grand piano. This time, the brilliant pianist and professor Dr. Anna Szpilberg played Chopin's Piano Concerto in F-minor, No.2, Op.21, and then Shostakovich's Concerto in F-major, No.2, Op. 102.

Not only that, but Nabil Fawaz, our gracious host, accompanied Szpilberg on a second grand piano, performing their orchestral arrangements side by side. It was one of the most incredible musical performances I have ever seen. No shade on the Fly Pan Am boys, but nobody had time to take a swig of lager here. Fingers were flying.

This event could not have transpired without Szpilberg's genuine musical genius. Before the recital, she sequestered herself in the huge home's basement, pacing, stewing, deliberately avoiding those in attendance. The struggle to get oneself onstage is real, even if that stage is only a dear friend's living room.

And yet it was Nabil Fawaz whose participation was integral. In a way, he and Oliver served similar roles — and it's *service* that's the operative word here. Both Mitchell and Fawaz

serve these performers, these performances, in such a way that breathes life into exceptional moments, those that rarely happen these days. Everyone wants to be a star. Nobody wants to be part of the constellation. But the constellation is what brings those stars into focus.

This generation just after mine — those we refer to as millennials — is indeed different. We've been bitching about the "kids these days" since Plato. But they didn't invent the internet just after Plato. They might as well have, though, since it doesn't make much difference what kind of society existed right on the cusp of the internet. No manner or amount of cultural preparation would have sufficed, then as now, to deal with the onslaught, the absence of any rules around what we used to quaintly call the "Information Superhighway." With everyone whizzing by, have we literally lost touch?

This generation just after mine, raised in the internet's midst, doesn't truly consider space and time, because the internet seems to transcend these limitations. This generation just after mine conceives of people like products, or real estate, infinitely renewable and expendable. That is because this generation after mine has swiped left on so many items online that they believe in the limitless choice of people, too. To use another metaphor, they believe that the human well is bottomless. It is not. One day we will sink our proverbial buckets into that well hoping to water our spirits with intelligence and beauty and service and come up dry.

Infinite iteration is a Capitalist illusion. Especially when it comes to people. Like bees or monarch butterflies, you can almost count how many really special people are left. And when there's only one, it's a shining beacon, it's a beam, a ray, a laser lighthouse on hostile shores.

Nabil Fawaz and Oliver Mitchell are those beacons. I don't mean people like them, because there are no people like them. It's them. They make culture happen, and it will be a total loss if this generation after mine continues to homogenize and marginalize those who refuse hyper-normalization, and collapse all of life's experiences onto a touch screen that doesn't, will never, reach out and touch you back.

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